

TOURIST' PROFILE AS CONSUMER CULTURAL, AMUSEMENT AND SPORTS OFFERING IN ISTRIA

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In this paper, the authors examine the preferences of tourists who are already consumers or could be the potential consumers of the tourist offering. The purpose of the paper is to provide answers to questions arising from this issue, taking into account socio-demographic attributes of tourists and association of those attributes and spending during vacation. The aim of research is to identify the profile of tourists who have chosen Istria., Paper presents the hypothesis that to increase tourist spending, it is necessary to develop a tourist profile and design a cultural, entertainment and sports offering that corresponds to this profile.

Keywords: *tourist profile, tourist preferences, tourism offering, tourist spending, tourism destination*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural resources are considered key factors of the tourism offering of the twenty-first century (Vrtiprah, 2006), and tourism destinations should seek to valorise these resources according to the profile of tourists that visit them. Gibson, Willming and Holdnak (2003) underline the importance of sports events to a minor degree through which fans become tourists. The socio-demographic characteristics of tourists have an impact on the way they perceive a tourism destination's image (Beerli and Martin, 2004), as this paper will demonstrate.

Tourist preferences and expectations need to be strategically planned and constantly monitored to optimise the cost of investments planned and to increase tourist spending. The services and facilities provided in a tourism destination should be adjusted to the profile of tourists, taking



into consideration their travel motivations, as well as their previous experiences.

This paper examines the preferences of tourist who are the consumers or the potential consumers of the events, cultural, entertainment, animation and sports offering. The basic aim of the paper is to identify the profile of tourists who have a preference for and choose to spend on the cultural, entertainment and sports part of the offering in the case of the Istria tourist destination. To this end, the authors provide answers to the relevant questions: Are socio-demographic features associated with tourist spending on events, entertainment, excursions, animation and sports? Which type of events, entertainment, excursions, animation and sports do tourists travelling to Istria prefer?

Following on the aims and questions stated, the authors have formulated a hypothesis claiming that **to increase tourist spending it is necessary to develop a tourist profile and design a cultural, entertainment and sports offering that corresponds to this profile**. To prove this hypothesis, research was conducted in 2008 in which 1326 tourists were surveyed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The authors consider the socio-demographic features of the surveyed tourists as being crucial elements in developing a tourist profile. In their paper focusing on the sex of visitors to wine cellars, Fraser, Alonso and Cohen (2008) have described the identification of concrete visitor groups as a potential strategy in attracting guests and providing the best services possible. Ramkissoon and Nunkoo (2008) underline the impact of nationality on tourist behaviour in seeking information. Involving extensive research into the socio-demographic features of tourists on the entire coastal part of Croatia, the 2004 TOMAS survey has provided the authors with a bearing regarding trends and deviations.

Research was aimed at exploring: 1) the profile of tourists visiting Istria, and 2) their propensity to spend on events, entertainment, excursions, animation and sports during vacation.

The primary instrument used in research to collect data was a questionnaire translated into a number of languages corresponding to the national structure of guests. These languages include the Croatian, Slovenian, German, Italian, Russian, Czech and Slovak languages.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions and was designed in three parts. The first part contained socio-demographic questions referring

to sex, age, nationality, education and net monthly income. The second part focused on how tourists obtained information about, and their propensity to spend on, services and facilities offered, while the third part posed questions regarding tourist satisfaction with and their evaluation of events, entertainment, excursions, animation and sports.

Tourists were surveyed in the period from 27 July to 15 October 2008. This means that, in addition to the peak tourist season (July and August), research also extended to the post-season (September and October). Initially, it was agreed with the directors and managers of accommodation facilities that they would have their employees distribute the questionnaires to tourists. Considering that 4,200 questionnaires were sent out and that the response rate was negligibly low, the survey was then conducted through interviewers at the accommodation facilities. The sample design as per accommodation units was determined by the structure of guests staying at a given facility in this period. Two interviewers would wait for tourists at the entrance of the accommodation facility's restaurant at breakfast time. First, they would explain the purpose and aim of the survey to the tourists and then, upon receiving their consent, the interviewers would distribute the questionnaire and be available for any additional explanation or information required. Each interviewer received instructions regarding respondent quotas, types of accommodation facilities, the nationality of tourists, and so on. The questionnaires collected after two rounds of surveying were entered into a SPSS software program package that was used for the statistical processing of data. The self-administered questionnaire method was used to gather data from guests staying in different facilities. The data obtained were then grouped and analysed. Table 1 illustrates the profile of respondents by socio-demographic attributes.

The survey was conducted in the territory of the Istrian Country and included the towns of Umag, Poreč, Rovinj, Medulin and Pula. During the first round, 61.9 % of respondents were surveyed; during the second, 38.1 %. Out of a total of 1,326 domestic and foreign tourists surveyed, 38.7 % were located in the Pula area; 26 %, in Rovinj; 23 %, in Umag; 9.1 %, in Poreč; and 3.2 %, in Medulin. The locations at which the survey was conducted were selected according to category and occupancy rates. These locations included 2-star, 3-star, and 4-star hotels, motor camps and apartment hotel complexes. The size of random was selected according to guest patterns and number in period that survey was made.

Table 1. Profile of tourists visiting Istria

	Attribute	Percentage
Sex	Male	43.6
	Female	52.9
Age group	Up to 25	12.7
	26 - 35	19.7
	36 - 45	24.8
	46 - 55	24.6
	Over 56	18.1
Educational qualifications	Elementary	8.7
	Secondary	35.5
	College and university	55.7
Country of origin	Germany	9.8
	Austria	6.3
	Italy	19.7
	Russia	26.6
	The Netherlands	5.0
	Great Britain	9.0
	Croatia	2.0
	Slovenia	5.2
	Poland	0.3
	USA	0.4
	Slovakia	4.0
	Belgium	1.2
	Norway	0.3
	Sweden	1.5
France	0.3	
Denmark	1.2	
Monthly income	Up to EUR 1,000	32.8
	EUR 1,000 - 2,000	37.2
	Over EUR 2,000	30.0

The sample is representative based on spatial coverage (6 larger tourist towns), countries of origin (16 countries) and types of accommodation (hotels, motor camps and apartment hotel complexes). The sample's size is considered to be sufficient for making conclusions, given that the number of respondents in similar studies (according to socio-demographic attributes) amounts to 880 (Awaritefe, 2008) ,609

(Fraser, Alonso and Cohen, 2008), 438 (Sangpikul, 2008) 152 respondents (Chaudhary, 2000)

The stratified random sample of the study consisted of 1,326 respondents of which 43.6 % were male and 56.0%, female; 12,7 %, younger than the age of 25; 19.7 %, in the 26-35 age group; 24.8 %, in the 36-45 age group; 24.6 %, in the 46-55 age group; 17.6 %, older than the age of 55. A total of 8.7 % of respondents have elementary school qualifications; 35.5 %, secondary school qualifications; and 55.7 %, college and university qualifications. The most of tourist were from Russia (26.6 %) and most of all tourist have between 1000 and 2000 Euros monthly income.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The intention was to explore whether any differences exist between guest groups. It was expected that this method would make it possible to single out guest categories that deserve special marketing and service strategies. Results were processed by the sex, age groups, educational qualifications and monthly income of tourists. Examples of similar surveys are in Reace and Tan article (2006: 253) and they point out that” selling tourist attraction is dependent of kind of attraction and tourist segmentation”

As the questionnaire used a number of different measurements, this made it necessary to apply statistical tests to identify and test the significant difference between the sample’s sub-groups. To determine the significance level of all relationships, the Chi-square test (χ^2) was applied to data that used nominal measurements. Chi-square (χ^2) “tests whether two categorical variables forming a contingency table are associated”(Friedl, 2005:725 in Fraser, Alonso, Cohen, 2008). Tests were made at a significance level of 95%.

Association of socio-demographic attributes of tourists and spending during vacation in Istria

Although the country of origin of tourists is included in socio-demographic indicators, it was not taken into consideration in this study due to the overly broad range of countries that would influence results. Table 2 demonstrates the association of selected socio-demographic attributes of tourists with spending on the tourism offering while holidaymaking in Istria. In questionnaire is given a chose about amount of spending: “up to 40 Euros/ between 40 and 70 Euros/over 70 Euros.

Table 2. Association of socio-demographic attributes of tourists and spending

Age-groups	Spending on events	35.191	12	P=0.000
	Spending on entertainment	13.978	15	P=0.527
	Spending on excursions	25.089	10	P= 0.005
	Spending on animation	23.571	15	P=0.73
	Spending on sports	12.663	15	P=0.628
Monthly income	Spending on events	48.414	6	P=0.000
	Spending on entertainment	20.541	6	P=0.002
	Spending on excursions	25.754	4	P= 0.000
	Spending on animation	30.048	6	P=0.000
	Spending on sport	45.888	6	P=0.000
Educational qualifications	Spending on events	46.937	9	P=0.000
	Spending on entertainment	21.474	9	P=0.011
	Spending on excursions	61.934	6	P= 0.000
	Spending on animation	12.280	9	P=0.198
	Spending on sports	13.394	9	P=0.146

The results of the Chi-square test do not indicate a statistically significant association of propensity to spend on the offering in the place of stay with the sex of respondents. This was confirmed by the absence of any statistically significant relation between these variables, with Pearson's χ^2 (gender and spending on events (12, n=821)=4,286 (p=0,978), (gender and spending on entertainment) (12, n=874)=14,653 (p=0,261), (gender and spending on excursions) (8, n=1068)=4,653 (p=0,830), (gender and spending on animation) (9, n=686)=14,976 (p=0,92), (gender and spending on sport) (12, n=789)=19,924 (p=0,69).

The age group of respondents is significantly related to spending on events and excursions during holidaymaking in Istria. Pearson's χ^2

between age-groups and spending on entertainment and sports shows any significant relationship.

Monthly income is significant for spending on all services and facilities the offering provides ($p=0,000$, $p=0,002$, $p=0,000$, $p=0,000$, $p=0,000$). Educational qualifications are significantly related to spending on events, entertainment and excursions ($p=0,000$, $p=0,011$, $p=0,000$), but not significantly related to spending on animation and sports.

The results obtained lead to the conclusion that in understanding the profile of tourists visiting the Istria tourist destination it is vital to take into consideration their age groups, monthly income and educational qualifications when planning for increased spending on events, entertainment, excursions, animation and sports.

Clearly, it is necessary to take into account the needs, wants and expectations of tourists with regard to their age, monthly incomes and educational qualifications, and to design an offering, based on these determinants, that will lead to increased spending as a result of proper planning.

Tourism destination managers need to continuously monitor the trends to which tourism is susceptible, in order to develop a tourist profile that will be used for designing a tourism offering and planning tourist spending. The ECT has noted the following trends:

- The raising of educational levels will influence holidaymaking in which art, culture, history and education will be of major importance.
- There is an emerging need for greater creativity in communicating information.
- There is a growing demand for new destinations in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Guests belonging to older age-groups are displaying an interest in cultural programs.

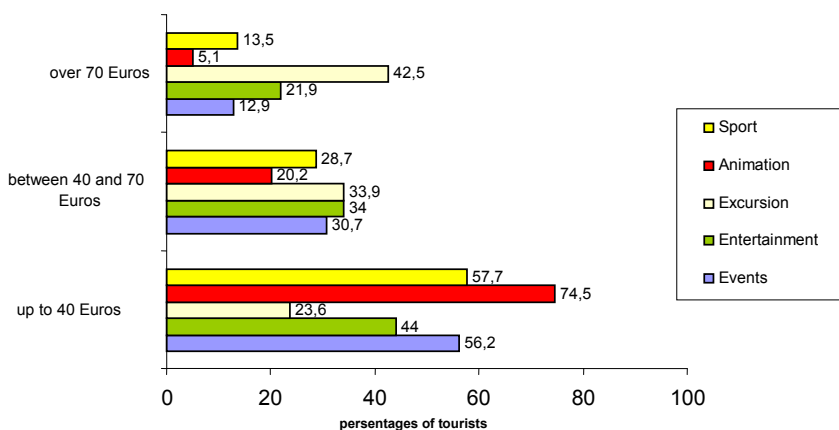
According to Dallen (2006:2), "tourist which is cultural heritage the main motive are: educational, better spender, they are travelling in groups and they are richer". TOMAS studies conducted in Croatia's coastal regions lead to the conclusion that the middle age-group prevails in the tourist population visiting this area. Also noted is an increase in the educational levels of guests. Guests are becoming increasingly more active, and their participation in various activities is growing, leading to an increase in the number of activities in which they can participate.

A comparison with the results of the study conducted in coastal Istria in the 2008 tourist season and post-season is indicative of similar trends. Tourists visiting coastal Istria are, in average, between 35 and 45 years of

age, have college and university qualifications, and earn a monthly income of EUR 1,000 – 2,000.

Further chart (No1.) shows how much Euros are tourist willing to pay for cultural, entertainment and sports offering during they vacation in Istria.

Chart 1. Tourist spending on cultural, entertainment and sports offering



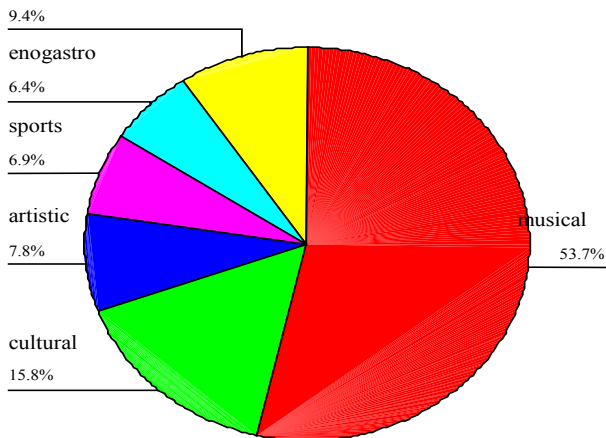
According to Chart 1 the most of tourists (42.5 %) are willing to spend their money (over 70 Euros) on excursions. On the second place is entertainment (21.9 %), then sport (12.9%). On the fourth place are events (13.5 %) and the last one is animation (5.1%). That is confirmed with result that 74.5 % tourists will spent less than 40 Euros on animation.

In all segments female are spending more than 70 Euros (except sport) more than male. The youngest and oldest tourists would pay over 70 Euros for excursions. Educational tourist most of the money will spend: on the first place- excursions, than entertainment, third are events, than sport and the last on the animation. Further, tourists with less than 1000 Euros of monthly income are spending over 70 Euros on excursions as the richer tourists.

Tourist preferences' of cultural, entertainment and sports offering in Istria

Socio-demographic attributes of tourist that were in Istria are in order of global trends. Preferences of tourist also were subject of research, for better understanding their needs and expectations. In further charts (No 2, No.3, No.4, No 5, No.6) are given those results Chart 2.shows the types of events that tourists prefer during holidays in Istria.

Chart 2. Events preferred during holidays



The results obtained show that the greatest percentage of tourists (53.7%) prefer musical events, followed by cultural events, in which 15.8% have expressed interest. While 7.8% and 6.9% of tourists are interested in artistic events and sports events, respectively, the smallest percentage (6.4%) are interested in eno-gastronomy events.

Chart 3. Tourist preferences regarding type of entertainment during holidays

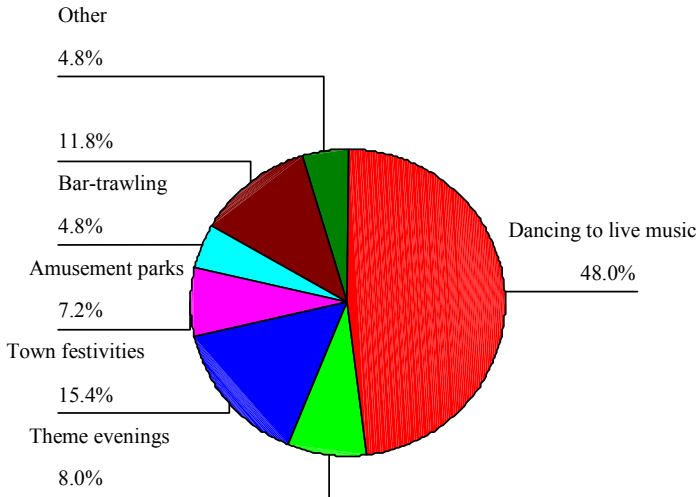


Chart 3 shows that tourists mostly prefer evenings with dancing and live music. This was the result expected considering the prevalence of the middle age-group. While 15.4% of tourists show a preference for organised town festivities, 11.8% are most interested in “bar-trawling”. About 8% of tourists prefer theme evenings in night clubs, and 7.2% are interested in amusement parks. Other types of entertainment include visits to the aquarium and organised night swimming, which 4.8% of the respondents prefer.

Chart 4. Types of excursions preferred during holidays

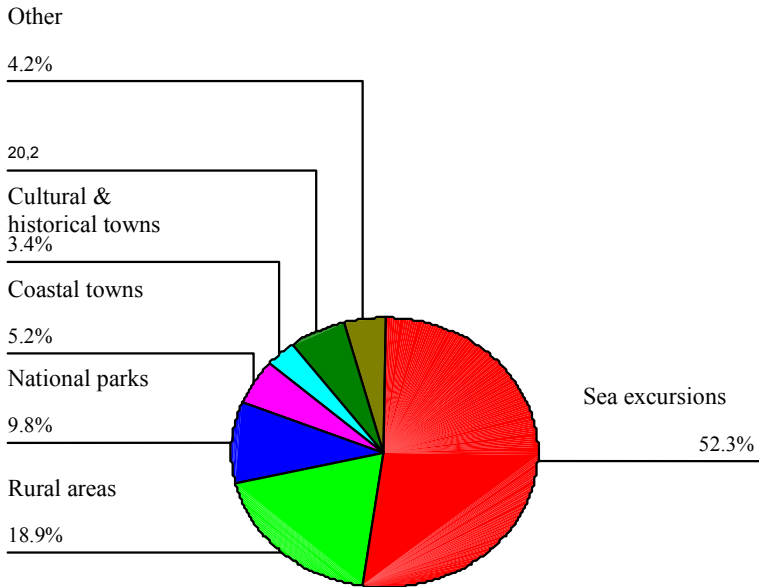


Chart 4 shows that 52.3% of respondents prefer marine excursions by boat, 18.9% wish to visit picturesque places in rural Istria, and 9.8% prefer excursions to national parks. While 6.1% of tourists surveyed are interested in visiting cultural and historical towns, a slightly lower percentage (3.4%) prefer to visit the towns on Istria's coast.

Chart 5. Tourist preferences regarding forms of animation

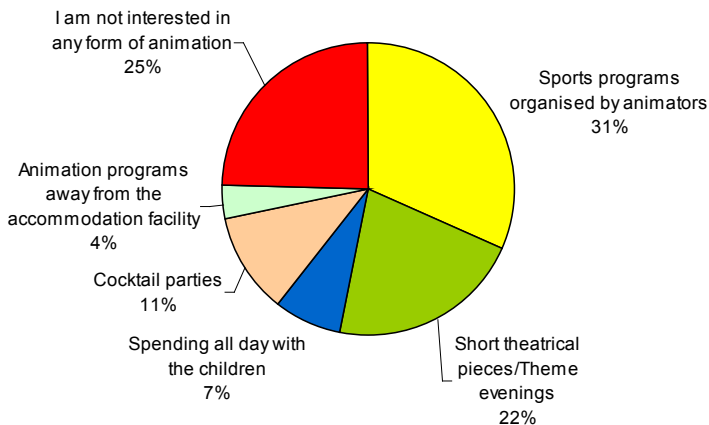


Chart 5. shows that 25 % of tourists are not interested for animation. According to mean age group that is predictable result. 31 % of tourist are interested in sports programs organized by animators, 22 % of them preferred theme evenings. For cocktail parties are interested 11 % of them and 7 % would like to have opportunity to leave their children with animation team. Only 4 % of tourists would like animation programs away from the accommodation facilities.

Chart 6. Tourist preferences regarding the sports offering

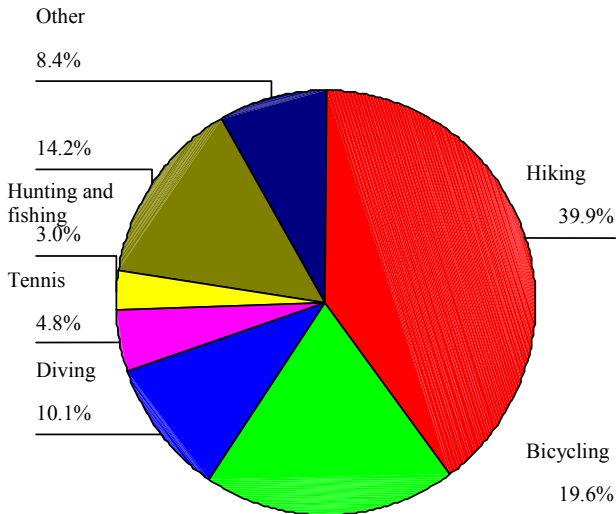


Chart 6 illustrates the types of sports and recreational activities that tourists to Istria are most interested in. Hiking is in first place (39.9%), followed by bicycling (19.6%). Hunting and fishing are interesting to 14.2% of tourists, and diving, to 10.1%. Tennis is the preferred sport of 4.8% of respondents.

CONSTRAINTS

Constraints were being a part of this study and authors consider it necessary to point them out. Because the questionnaires were distributed among respondents based on self-selection and self-assessment, the authors see these conditions as constraining, from which could have resulted differences in the prevalence of respondents of one sex or age group depending upon the inclination of the interviewer.

Initially, the study was conceived as covering three time periods: the pre-season, the peak season, and the post-season. Ineffective collaboration with the directors of accommodation facilities, because of which the pre-season was bypassed, has resulted in another constraint.

To some extent, the design of the questionnaire and the insufficiently open qualitative approach that was time limited (during breakfast in accommodation facilities) can also be considered as constraints.

Area size could also have influenced results, considering that the survey involved larger towns on the coast.

In keeping with the above, although the results obtained could be generalised, they should not be taken as evidence or considered a fact pertaining to all tourists visiting Croatia, together with their attitudes and preferences.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

When talking about nowadays tourists' profile, results of this study are in accordance with global tourism trends: growth of elderly population, increasing number of families without children that are focused on themselves and have a greater need for active and more experienced holidays (Moutinho, 2005). Very important market segment are middle-aged tourists who often choose distant destinations, stay longer on holidays, combine two or more destinations during one trip and want to participate in various activities as well as spend more on their travels.

According to findings of the study, the typical tourist visiting Istria belongs to the middle age-group, possesses higher educational qualifications, earns a monthly income of up to EUR 2,000, prefers musical events, likes evenings with dancing and live music, and prefers organized boat excursions the most. Of the various forms of animation provided, the average tourist is most interested in sports programs organized by animators, and with regards to sports and recreation, his/her greatest interest is hiking and being in the outdoors.

Imbalance of tourist supply and demand in the Istria tourist destination creates the need for making a richer tourist offer that will increase tourist spending. Creation of each segment offers (excursions, entertainment, animation, sports) should be adjusted to age, monthly income and level of education of tourists.

POLICIES IMPLICATIONS

Istria has a natural, infrastructure and climate resources for meeting tourist's needs which prefer an active vacation, experience, desire to learn and achievement of physical and mental balance. Management of tourist destinations should adapt its tourism policies to global tourism trends and coordinate all of entities of the tourist offer to change its image of "sun and the sea" destination. Since tourist destination is a product itself, it is very important that this product is innovative and original with high quality and rich content that will satisfy the growing demand for services that are not standardized.

This tourist profile should serve as a sort of guidepost in helping tourism destination managers to create an offer that will satisfy tourist's needs. The authors suggest that the management of the Istria tourism destination should tackle this issue in two ways:

1) by maximizing spending consistent with the preferences of the tourist profile- the aim should be to create an offer according to tourists' preferences (e.g., trips by sea) enriched with additional activities that increase the consumption of tourists (e.g., with sightseeing, fishing, diving, taking a photo with the captain, etc.)

2) by focusing marketing activities on attracting tourists of a different profile-the aim should be to create an offer that will attract the interest of different groups of consumers (e.g., tourists younger age-trendsetters, singles, couples without children, couples with higher incomes).

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